

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000436

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHER

From Brazzaville Embassy Office

E.O.12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [ASEC](#) [CF](#)

SUBJECT: CONGO/B: POLITICAL ATMOSPHERICS - POOL REGION

ELECTIONS ANNOUNCED, NINJAS STAND OFF IN BaCongo DISTRICT

REFS: (A) Kinshasa 00089 (B) Kinshasa 00080

1. (SBU) Summary: Over the last two weeks, both the Ninja and Pool Region issues have returned to the forefront of the political landscape in Congo-Brazzaville. Beginning with a stand off between "Ninjas" and security forces in the BaCongo neighborhood of Brazzaville followed by the Government's announcements of both the EU-UNDP Development and Reintegration (DR) Program and Pool Region elections in 2005, there has been a return of political focus to the country's most lingering post-conflict issues. The war torn Pool region remains the biggest challenge to long term political stability and economic growth for the Congo. After almost a 10-month hiatus of any public discussion on Pool issues, it appears that the Government has decided to put the Region back on the political front burner. In addition, local and some international NGOs have stepped up their concerns about the overall lack of development of the Pool, releasing a negative report on the state of humanitarian affairs in the Region. It is important to note that the term "Ninja" in ROC is linked - sometimes rightly or wrongly - to any armed element that is not a member of formal Government forces. There is no large formalized "Ninja" group under the direct control of Pasteur Ntumi that existed prior to the March 2003 peace accords. Many of the "Ninjas" have splintered into small armed bands that harass and intimidate the local population. Some of these armed bands still have links to Ntumi, but do not necessarily take direction from him. That being said, Pasteur still has a selected following in Brazzaville, his forest base camp in Vindza, and other village centers in the heart of the Pool Region. The actual size of his current following and supporters is unknown. End Summary.

Ninja-Gendarmes/Police March 3-4 Standoff:

2. (U) The dust up between "Ninjas" and security forces over the March 3-4 period caused by a "Ninja" reportedly in possession of cannabis was enough to again upset the delicate balance of stability in the BaCongo neighborhood of Brazzaville where many southern ethnic groups live. The social, professional, and economic divisions of the country still fall along the north-south ethnic lines, with the power and influence in all these areas lying with ethnic groups from the North. The recent stand off erupted when "Ninjas" sought to forcibly release from jail the "Ninja" arrested for having cannabis. No one was killed in the stand off and the Government and Ntumi associates later worked out an agreement that according to diplomatic, press and other Mission contacts, included receiving about CFA 21 million (approximately \$USD 45,000) from the Government to stand down.

Announcement of Pool Elections in 2005

3. (U) On March 7, the Government announced that elections would be held in the Pool Region sometime in 2005 for the eight national assembly seats not contested in the 2002 election because of the continued instability in the area at that time. During the course of the announcement, Government commentary on nationally-controlled TeleCongo -- almost in a pre-campaign position -- highlighted that recent March 3-4 incidents in BaCongo demonstrated that Ntumi and his "Ninjas" did not truly desire peace or democracy and that the Congolese people should not consider him or his supporters viable participants in an election process. There are indications in the press that the government may consider holding the Pool elections prior to this year's August 15 national day celebrations. Meanwhile, UNDP's consultant for the EU-funded Development and Reintegration (DR) project arrived to begin implementing the DR program which will focus on encouraging former combatants and "Ninjas" in the Pool to turn in their weapons and participate in micro-enterprise activities such as agriculture and school rehabilitation.

Negative NGO Reports on Pool Region

14. (SBU) On top of the BaCongo incidents and the government's announcement of Pool Region elections this year, local NGOs working under the umbrella of Caritas issued a negative report on the humanitarian conditions in the area. The report cited that the Government is neglecting rehabilitating schools, villages, hospitals, infrastructure and the agricultural sector. (NB: During a recent trip to the Region, Ambassador saw first hand the devastation left by the 1997-2001 civil war. There are no roads or electricity in most areas, and homes, hospitals and schools remained war-torn, with bombed out school facilities housing 1000 or more children. End NB). The government has not reacted well to the report and many officials see it as a coordinated attempt by some local NGOs to damage Congo's image.

Comment:

15. (SBU) Incidents in the BaCongo area of Brazzaville will likely continue to happen as current and former "Ninjas" try to coexist in the same area that has a large presence of security forces. Many of the "Ninjas" live in and around the house that the government had refurbished in late 2003 for Pasteur Ntumi. However, Ntumi has thus far refused to leave his forest based camp in Vindza, remaining concerned about his personal safety. Given the lack of infrastructure and confidence in the government process by many Pool Region villagers and residents and the lawlessness and harassment of the civilian population by uncontrolled elements of both the security forces and "Ninjas" in the Region, we will need to wait and see if the elections in this troubled area really will take place in the next 6-9 months.

16. Brazzaville Embassy Office - Sanders
MEECE